AMENDMENT

In the Claims:

The following listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application. Claims 1-2, 17-19, and 21-31, and 33-34 are currently pending in the application with claims 1, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 31, and 34 being independent claims. Claims 3-16, 20, and 32 were previously canceled. Currently amended claims are shown with additions underlined and deletions in ~~strikethrough text~~. No new matter is added by this amendment to the claims.

Claim 1 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a radio frequency tag configured to be coupled to an object within a container;

an interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to acquire an inventory-related information associated with the radio frequency tag;

a data storage means; and

an externally accessible radio frequency tag coupled to an exterior portion of the container,

the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the data storage means, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the externally accessible radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator, the externally accessible radio frequency tag being prevented from sending the indicator to the external radio frequency identification interrogator when the container is open.

Claim 2 (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the externally accessible radio frequency tag is at least one of an active tag or a semi-passive tag, the data storage means being included in the externally accessible radio frequency tag.

Claims 3-16 (Canceled)

Claim 17 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a radio frequency tag configured to be coupled to an object within a container;

an interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to acquire an inventory-related information associated with the radio frequency tag;

a data storage means; and

an externally accessible radio frequency tag coupled to an exterior portion of the container,

the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the data storage means, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the externally accessible radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator being triggered to acquire the inventory-related information in response to the container being closed.

Claim 18 (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 17, wherein the interior radio frequency identification interrogator is triggered to acquire the inventory-related information in response to at least one of a signal from a motion sensor or a signal produced by a timer.

Claim 19 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a radio frequency tag configured to be coupled to an object within a container;

an interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to acquire an inventory-related information associated with the radio frequency tag;

a data storage means; and

an externally accessible radio frequency tag coupled to an exterior portion of the container,

the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the data storage means, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the externally accessible radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator includes an interrogator antenna coupled to the externally accessible radio frequency tag.

Claim 20 (Canceled)

Claim 21 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a radio frequency tag configured to be coupled to an object within a container;

an interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to acquire an inventory-related information associated with the radio frequency tag;

a data storage means; and

an externally accessible radio frequency tag coupled to an exterior portion of the container,

the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the data storage means, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the externally accessible radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator, the externally accessible radio frequency tag being ~~is~~ configured to change from a power-conserving mode to an inventory-acquiring mode when a switch that is configured to be attached to the container is toggled in response to the container being closed, the externally accessible radio frequency tag using the interior radio frequency identification interrogator when in the inventory-acquiring mode to acquire the inventory-related information during an interrogation time period.

Claim 22 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

a radio frequency tag configured to be coupled to an object within a container;

an interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to be coupled to an interior portion of the container and configured to acquire an inventory-related information associated with the radio frequency tag;

a data storage means; and

an externally accessible radio frequency tag coupled to an exterior portion of the container,

the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the data storage means, the interior radio frequency identification interrogator configured to transfer the inventory-related information to the externally accessible radio frequency tag, the externally accessible radio frequency tag configured to send an indicator of the inventory-related information to an external radio frequency identification interrogator when interrogated by the external radio frequency identification interrogator, the inventory-related information acquired from the radio frequency tag being translated by the externally-accessible radio frequency tag from a signal that is incompatible with the external radio frequency identification interrogator into a signal that is compatible with the external radio frequency identification interrogator.

Claim 23 (Previously Presented) A method, comprising:

acquiring information associated with a radio frequency tag disposed within a container using an interior radio frequency interrogator disposed within the container, the acquiring being triggered when the container changes from being open to closed, the radio frequency tag coupled to an object disposed within the container; and

transferring the information to an exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to the container, the exterior radio frequency tag configured to send an inventory indicator to an external interrogator, the inventory indicator being based on the information.

Claim 24 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, further comprising:

preventing the exterior radio frequency tag from sending the inventory indicator to the external interrogator when the container is open.

Claim 25 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the interior radio frequency interrogator is an interior interrogator antenna used by the exterior radio frequency tag to acquire the information, the exterior radio frequency tag is coupled to the interior interrogator antenna.

Claim 26 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the acquiring includes acquiring during an interrogation time period, a start of the interrogation time period is defined when the container changes from being open to closed.

Claim 27 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the radio frequency tag is a passive radio frequency tag.

Claim 28 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the container is a first container disposed inside of a second container, the interior radio frequency interrogator is a first interior radio frequency interrogator, the exterior radio frequency tag is a first exterior radio frequency tag disposed within the second container,

the method further comprising:

acquiring information associated with the first exterior radio frequency tag using a second interior radio frequency interrogator disposed within the second container and disposed exterior to the first container; and

transferring the information associated with the first exterior radio frequency tag to a second exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to the second container.

Claim 29 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, wherein the acquiring includes acquiring at a first time,

the method, further comprising:

sending the information at a second time to the external interrogator as a beacon signal after a preset time interval has elapsed, the sending being prevented when the container is open, the second time being after the first time.

Claim 30 (Previously Presented) The method of claim 23, further comprising:

receiving at the exterior radio frequency tag a polling signal from the external interrogator at a first time when the container is open, the polling signal being a request for the inventory information; and

sending the inventory information at a second time to the external interrogator when the container is closed, the second time being after the first time.

Claim 31 (Previously Presented) An apparatus, comprising:

an exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to a container and configured to send an inventory indicator to an external interrogator, the inventory indicator indicating inventory information associated with a group of radio identification tags disposed within the container; and

an interior interrogator coupled to the exterior radio frequency tag and configured to be disposed within an interior portion of the container, the interior interrogator configured to poll during an interrogation time period each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags to acquire an identification of each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags, the inventory information being based on the identification of each radio identification tag, the interrogation time period being triggered by at least one of a toggling of a switch when the container is closed, a toggling of the switch when the container is opened, a signal from a motion sensor, or a signal from the external interrogator.

Claim 32 (Canceled)

Claim 33 (Previously Presented) The apparatus of claim 31, wherein a radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags is configured to be attached to an object, at least one of the object or the radio identification tag is oriented within the container to facilitate the acquiring by the interior interrogator.

Claim 34 (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

an exterior radio frequency tag disposed exterior to a container and configured to send an inventory indicator to an external interrogator, the inventory indicator indicating inventory information associated with a group of radio identification tags disposed within the container, the exterior radio frequency tag being prevented from sending the inventory indicator to the external interrogator when the container is open; and

an interior interrogator coupled to the exterior radio frequency tag and configured to be disposed within an interior portion of the container, the interior interrogator configured to poll during an interrogation time period each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags to acquire an identification of each radio identification tag from the group of radio identification tags, the inventory information being based on the identification of each radio identification tag.